

The Wholeness Institute

JANUARY 2015

The place for fresh starts and powerful change

NEW BEGINNINGS

I came across a recent essay by the gifted author David Whyte titled, "Beginning". So much of what he wrote spoke to me, I have been mentally preparing for a fresh new year. The focus in the media at the start of each January is focused on resolutions for new changes of positive habits, many of them physical goals. While those are worthy of the time and effort, we'll leave those discussions to the many other outlets bringing awareness to healthy new physical challenges. Let's instead take a moment to consider a shift in thought process and take some of the fear out of a shiny clean blank slate. The 'where to begin' may simply not be as important as the act of beginning. Take a moment to consider Whyte's eloquent words:

BEGINNING

well or beginning poorly, what is important is simply to begin, but the ability to make a good beginning is also an art form, beginning well involves a clearing away of the crass, the irrelevant and the complicated to find the beautiful, often hidden lineaments of the essential and the necessary.

Beginning is difficult, and our procrastination is a fine, ever-present measure of our reluctance to take that first close-in, courageous step in reclaiming our happiness. Perhaps, because taking a new step always leads to a kind of radical internal simplification, where, suddenly, very large parts of us, parts of us we have kept gainfully employed for years, parts of us still rehearsing the old complicated story, are suddenly out of a job. There occurs in effect, a form of internal corporate downsizing, where the parts of us too afraid to participate or having nothing now to offer, are let go, with all of the accompanying death-like trauma, and where the very last fight occurs, a rear guard disbelief that this new, less complicated self, and this very simple step, is all that is needed for the new possibilities ahead.

It is always hard to believe that the courageous step is so close to us, that it is closer than we ever could imagine, that in fact, we already know what it is, and that the step is simpler, more radical than we had thought: which is why we so often prefer the story to be more elaborate, our identities clouded by fear, the horizon safely in the distance, the essay longer than it needs to be and the answer safely in the realm of impossibility...

'BEGINNING' From the upcoming book of essays CONSOLATIONS: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words. © David Whyte 2014

My first steps in this new year of ours actually started last month. A fresh coat of paint gleams on my walls, a rotation of my artwork to inspire my senses, and a purge of the no-longer-needed has me feeling lighter. A renewed sense of what matters to me, not the physical goods, but the freshening of my rooms allows me some mental clarity and focus on my goals. What steps can you take to clear away the old and allow a breath of freshness? Small steps can lead to great change; as Whyte says, "Beginning well or beginning poorly, what is important is to simply begin". Where will you start?



Moving Deeper: Healing, Spirituality, and Music

This past holiday season I received a most precious gift and I wanted to share a part of it with you—and perhaps the music I received as a part of it will speak to you. A previous client of mine shared the song “Healing, Part II” with me along with his own letter that spoke of the impact both of the *Healing* album Rundgren made back in the early 1980’s as well as the impact of therapy. In brief he said: “The first time that I stepped into your office after my injury you gave me the two things that I truly needed to begin to heal, Hope and Understanding.” For those of you who know me you are aware that hope is exactly what I want my clients to feel if they come in unsure that anything can change. But especially for those of you who have experienced head injury, major illness, or severe depression, hope is often far away when you walk in that door.

Healing Part II

By Todd Rundgren
1981, Bearsville Rhino Labels
From album: *Healing*

Where you are going
You cannot take your body
You are on a journey
The baggage is too heavy

You can leave your legs behind you
You will learn to fly
You can leave your arms behind you
You will touch the sky
You can leave your head behind
You are thought itself
You can leave the rest behind you
You are breath itself

Now you are naked
There's no one here to judge you
See the clear light
Shining high above you
Though you float within the silence
You are not alone
For the power of your being
Keeps you flowing on

Look upon yourself
Only with compassion
Strip away the shell
Hiding you perfection
Though your past was full of darkness
Now the past is gone
And your life is starting over
When it's just begun

Now you are whole
Don't you recognize it
Towering eternal
Behind the troubled thoughts that hide it
Though at times it seems so distant
It is always there
When you need its peace and power
You will know it's here



Todd Rundgren—see and hear him singing
Healing Part II at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0s480ubPFdA>

This song speaks of the therapy process so well, and how hope can follow, that I want to go through it. And frankly, whether this is your first experience with therapy or you have processed many other things, each time we go through this process we reach new depths within ourselves as well as deeper peace and hope and understanding.

"Where you are going; You cannot take your body; You are on a journey; the baggage is too heavy"

First, clearly the healing in the process of psychotherapy is one in which the body heals less than the spirit and psyche. Thus you truly don't take your body with you so much as the mind, spirit, and soul. The baggage, the past or the feelings, are really weighing you down—and so they feel too heavy.

"You can leave your legs behind you; You will learn to fly; You can leave your arms behind you; You will touch the sky; You can leave your head behind; You are thought itself; You can leave the rest behind you; You are breath itself"

The next step is of also leaving your legs behind. The legs often symbolize movement in dreams. Rundgren writes that we will fly if we let go of our legs; we will reach new heights if we leave our arms behind. Wow—that's amazing! So—if we let go of our control of movement forward; if we let go of our need to take care of ourselves by release of our arms we will experience so much more than we can consider now! For those of you who have been through therapy you know that it is in letting go of the past, or of the need to control and maintain, that we actually do move forward and heal. For someone new to therapy the release of control is often terrifying. And yet, in letting go of the past, of what we know to do, we learn new ways and do change.

"Now you are naked; There's no one here to judge you; See the clear light; Shining high above you; Though you float within the silence; You are not alone; For the power of your being; Keeps you flowing on"

But is it all that easy? Well, the next stanza of Rundgren's song says—NO. You're naked, vulnerable in front of another. And that can be frightening...although freeing. One of my favorite theorist-practitioners is Virginia Satir. She spoke of this as well, helping therapists see that to truly help another we must often break the very thing that has always been a family rule. For each individual that rule varies. Is it to "not talk", keep the silence of feelings and experiences? Or perhaps to "buck up", as I heard a speaker on NPR say in a recent Story Telling segment? Well, by considering change, and movement to what is more functional today, we often must allow a "clear light; shining high above" illuminate what needs to change. Or how do we let go of the pain of a loss or betrayal? Through forgiveness, or new understanding, or maybe allowing God, Spirit, Higher Power, Universe—to take it over for us. In other words, allowing that we "are not alone...the power...keeps you flowing" as you change. All of these are often frightening prospects as we consider letting go and allowing ourselves to be vulnerable, genuine, and eventually fly. So in the therapy process we must together be willing to "float in the silence" - not have to have all of the answers. Then, knowing you are not alone—we are in this process called therapy together—you can come to flow in your process of healing. But it is only in the vulnerability that we move forward. So this is the step of learning to trust. The person who wrote me mentioned the need to let go of his 'need to know' or to replicate 'what had been' in his life and his identity and in that process he began to find clarity and a new life.

"Look upon yourself; Only with compassion; Strip away the shell; Hiding your perfection; Though your past was full of darkness; Now the past is gone; And your life is starting over; When it's just begun"

Rundgren continues to speak of this as he writes of being self-compassionate, but "strip[ping] away the shell" that allows one to move from darkness to new life. This happens therapeutically as we move now, able to be vulnerable and share, and are also able to re-evaluate. We learn to care for ourselves, to love ourselves, and to recognize that perhaps the pain of the past, or present, is to help us move forward. The person who wrote said that he learned that by asking the difficult questions he was able to go from anger and pain of the past to the "pathways to knowledge" and even to recognize "misfortune ... was really a blessing".

"Now you are whole; Don't you recognize it; Towering eternal; Behind the troubled thoughts that hide it; Though at times it seems so distant; It is always there; When you need its peace and power; You will know it's here"

While I'm not going to share this person's misfortune or pain here, I can share that for many with whom I've worked the pain of abuse, an unfortunate marriage, and or a severe physical illness can lead to something else. At one point in my life I felt that I might lose my faith, as I learned to fly I found great healing in what and how I viewed myself; a deeper sense of connection in the world; and eventually, slowly, a release of the pent up anger I'd felt both for a few people on earth as well as allowing a spiritual healing of my heart and soul. Was this overnight? I think not. But it was worth every day that I chose to keep in the process and not give up. The individual who wrote me said the same had occurred in his life. And, as Rundgren says, as we come through the process we find that "Now you are whole".

The final gift of all of this? As the person said in the letter, and as many have shared with me:

- *thoughts or feelings that are no longer painful or distressing;
- *wellness
- *clarity and new life
- *solutions to problems
- *hope
- *life lived more closely aligned with the being I was created to be
- *a sense of rebirth
- *on the pathway to a more healthy life: spiritually, psychologically, soulfully

The progress each person makes is different, and often the changes occur at various times in our lives. For one person it is a return to prior functioning. For another a new awareness of self. For others a new understanding. And for others new tools to use in living. But if you will put down the baggage, allow yourself to leave the past or a part of you or your past behind, experience vulnerability in sharing and find that sharing can be safe, then the darkness will pass, and you will experience, as the song says, "peace and power...You will know it's here".



Optimism and hope are radically different attitudes. Optimism is the expectation that things—the weather, human relationships, the economy, the political situation, and so on—will get better. Hope is the trust that God will fulfill God's promises to us in a way that leads us to true freedom. The optimist speaks about concrete changes in the future. The person of hope lives in the moment with the knowledge and trust that all of life is in good hands.

All the great spiritual leaders in history were people of hope. Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Mary, Jesus, Rumi, Gandhi, and Dorothy Day all lived with a promise in their hearts that guided them toward the future without the need to know exactly what it would look like. Let's live with hope. (From the writings of Henri Nouwen)

READING:

Grace Unfolding: Psychotherapy in the Spirit of Tao-te ching

<http://www.amazon.com/Grace-Unfolding-Psychotherapy-Spirit-Tao-te/dp/0517881306>

The Miller's Daughter

http://www.amazon.com/Millers-Daughter-Robin-Dilley-ebook/dp/B00DV5TIBS/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1421767706&sr=8-1-fkmr0&keywords=the+millers%27s+daughter%2C+robin+b.+dilley

Recipes Let's use some of our fresh citrus in season in the Valley this month!

Grapefruit-Vanilla Curd

taken from seriouseats.com

- 2/3 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons grated grapefruit zest
- Seeds scraped from 1/4 vanilla bean
- 3 large whole eggs
- 4 large egg yolks
- 1/2 cup freshly squeezed grapefruit juice
- 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, chilled and cut into small cubes



Bring water to a simmer in a double-boiler. Combine the sugar, grapefruit zest, and vanilla seeds, and pulse in a food processor until well combined and very fragrant. Combine the grapefruit sugar, eggs and egg yolks in the heatproof bowl and whisk for one minute. Place the bowl over the pot with simmering water and whisk constantly for about 30 seconds, or until the sugar is dissolved. Add the grapefruit juice and lemon juice and cook, whisking frequently, until the curd reads 170° F on a candy thermometer and has the consistency of sour cream, about 10 minutes. Remove the bowl from the heat. Whisk in the pieces of cold butter one by one until they are completely incorporated. Strain the curd through a fine-mesh sieve into a clean bowl. Serve as a condiment with scones or toast for breakfast, or spooned into tart shells for dessert. Will keep, tightly covered, in the fridge for up to two weeks, or frozen for several months. Yield: About 2 cups.

Recipes (cont.)



DIY All Purpose Citrus Vinegar Cleaners

Cleaner #1: Orange Spice

Add cinnamon sticks, whole cloves, and almond extract to a jar. Fill with orange peels. Add enough vinegar to cover the peels. Put the lid on and let it sit for 2 weeks (or up to 1 month).

Cleaner #2: Lemon Rosemary

Add rosemary sprigs & vanilla extract to a jar, fill with lemon peels. Same procedure as above.

Cleaner #3: Lime Thyme

Add thyme sprigs to a jar, fill with lime peels. Same procedure as above.

Cleaner #4: Grapefruit Mint

Add mint sprigs to a jar, fill with grapefruit peels. Same procedure as above.

After at least two weeks of soaking time, strain the vinegar solution and store in a sealed jar up to a year. To use, add approximately 1/3 vinegar solution to 2/3 water to a spray bottle. When sprayed, the vinegar smell will dissipate leaving only the citrus scent behind. Scent may be enhanced by adding some corresponding essential oils to the mixture. Enjoy!

Please note: These vinegar cleaners are all-purpose but should not be used on granite and marble. Vinegar is acidic and can mar the finish of porous stone countertops so use with care.

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